

From: Chip Richards
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 5:31pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

I would like to add my voice to those opposing the current form of the Proposed Final Judgment in United States v. Microsoft.

I have been in the computer business since 1974. I have seen the growth of the computer industry from its relatively esoteric origins into the commercial giant it is today. Computers are how I make my living, so this subject, and this settlement, are understandably of great interest to me.

Microsoft has done some good things for the computer industry and for other businesses and individuals who depend on it. I used to have a very high opinion of the company and its products; I even applied for a job there at one time. But over the years, I have seen them change from a source of benefit for world commerce into a distinct liability.

Were I a lawyer, I'd write a brief addressing the specifics of the settlement. But I'm not--as a software engineer, I can only speak about the world as it looks through my lenses. And I know a lead weight when I see one. I can tell when commerce is in a stranglehold. I can see that overall technological progress has slowed, and is threatening to stop entirely. And Microsoft is at the heart of all of it. I have nothing but personal evidence to offer; I doubt if anyone has the time to read all the tales I have to tell about Microsoft's negative effects on my colleagues and their businesses, so I won't waste time putting them here.

And I can't argue that it's only the USA which is hurt by Microsoft's unchecked control of computer software, and indirectly, hardware, technology. It's pretty much the whole world. So we're not falling **behind** anyone else, we're just falling. Are you reading this on a Microsoft system, or was it printed from one? Did the purchasers of that system have a choice? A **real** choice? Does that tell you anything? If a small company tried purposely to impede other companies and enterprises, they'd no doubt fail. But Microsoft has the reach and the clout to make their wishes become reality, time after time.

If the last two centuries have taught us anything, it is that technological progress, in general, benefits everyone. The only sure thing I can say today is that everything in my heart and my mind, and all my experience, is telling me that Microsoft is intentionally impeding the progress of computer technology in the name of profit. Their power over us has increased, and is increasing, exponentially. Curb it now, before the option no longer exists.

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W. M. Richards
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